

Responses to the 2007 MLA Report 'Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World'

Friederike Eigler / Gabi Kathöfer

Introduction

The following contributions, including this introduction, are based on presentations for a roundtable discussion that took place at the 2008 conference of "Women in German" in Snowbird, Utah. The contributors raise a wide range of topics and concerns, a range that is in part a reflection of the diverse institutional context they represent and of the academic and administrative positions they have held:

Lisabeth Hock is associate professor of German at a Modern Language Department at Wayne State University, a large public university. The topic of her paper is "The MLA Report and the Urban, Public Institution."

For many years, Charlotte Melin was Director of Language Instruction in the Dept. of German, Scandinavian and Dutch at U. of Minnesota, a large public research university. She is now chair of the department and currently serves on the MLA Committee on the Teaching of Languages. Her contribution addresses "Teaching Graduate Students about Teaching—Beyond the MLA Report."

Karen Remmler is Chair of the German Studies Department and the Critical Social Thought Program at Mount Holyoke College, a Liberal Arts College for Women in New England. She is the former co-director of the Weissman Center for Leadership and

the Liberal Arts at the College. Her paper is titled “Rethinking the Place of Languages in a Transcultural Curriculum: Faculty Desire Lines, Curricular Clusters, and the Liberal Arts.”

In the following, we will briefly contextualize their contributions by highlighting the larger national debate to which the 2007 MLA Report responds, some of the most important aspects of the Report itself, and some of the published responses since the appearance of the Report a year and half ago. We will conclude by raising a few overarching questions, questions that were discussed at the Roundtable but that might also help to initiate an on-line debate in this virtual forum.

The 2007 MLA Report is the result of an Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages, established by the MLA Executive Council in 2004 and chaired by Mary Louise Pratt. The committee was charged with responding to the ‘language crisis’ in the wake of 9/11 and the War on Terror, i.e., to the sudden awareness at the national level of the consequences of chronic underfunding of foreign language education and hurried attempts to remedy this crisis. The MLA Report seeks to intervene in this larger discussion by promoting what it calls a ‘constitutive’ notion of language, one that recognizes and explicitly teaches language in cultural and historical contexts, and by rejecting what it terms an ‘instrumentalist’ approach to language, one that presumes languages can be taught as a skill largely detached from these contexts. Ultimately, the MLA Report is a call to action directed at Foreign Language departments across the U.S to rethink and revamp central aspects of collegiate FL programs: academically, pedagogically and administratively. Unless major changes take place, the Report argues, FL departments, and the profession at large, risk losing the opportunity to shape the future of Foreign Language Education in the U.S. at this critical historical juncture.

As part of this call for action, the Report attributes central importance to two issues:

1. The necessity to transform the two-tier system, i.e., the division of many FL programs in lower level language courses on the one hand and upper level literature/culture courses on the other. A two-tier system, — and the hierarchies that are an intricate part of this division, especially at large research universities — the Report argues, impedes program coherence and intradepartmental communication about curricular issues and learning. By implication, then, the current governance structures impede the ability of FL programs to provide leadership in the current debate.

2. Translingual and transcultural competence: The Report considers these competences, which are closely related to a ‘constitutive’ notion of language, to be the main goals of FL education. Although the report does not elaborate on how these goals can be achieved, it is clear that the meaningful introduction of content in lower-level lan-

guage courses and the systematic attention to issues of language in upper-level courses is part and parcel of these goals. Beyond that, the Report advocates a broadening of subject matters and text genres rather than a privileging of literary texts, and it recommends closer collaboration with other disciplines.

Subsequent responses to the Report have explored both its far-reaching implications for the profession as well as some of its shortcomings. (Examples for published responses include the joint appearance of article clusters on overcoming the literature/language split in the *Unterrichtspraxis* (41.1, 2008), a journal traditionally concerned with language pedagogy and SLA, and the *German Quarterly* (81.2, 2008), the flagship journal of the profession for literary and cultural studies. Another example is the spring issue of *Modern Language Journal* (92.2, 2008) which includes a number of insightful and critical responses to the MLA Report from a range of institutional perspectives).

Arguably, the most important role of the Report lies in the very fact that it continues to provoke discussions (which, in turn, inform various reform efforts) in a range of professional fora, including this one. In addition to the important issues and concerns each of the three contributions below raises individually, we (the panel organizers) would like to raise two overarching questions:

- The MLA report articulates two major goals that seem to be at odds with one another: first, the centrality of foreign language education and second, the importance of reaching out to other disciplines. The instructional focus on the target language may however conflict with inter- or cross-disciplinary projects and coursework. What are examples of integrating these two goals in specific curricular and institutional contexts?
- What are various institutional and departmental manifestations of the two-tier system and how important or desirable is it to overcome this system? For instance, what is the connection between the two-tier system and the reform of graduate student education? And to what extent does the two-tier system affect smaller undergraduate programs as well?

Lisabeth Hock

The MLA Report and the Urban, Public Institution

I. Introduction

Together, the 2007 MLA Report, “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World” and the follow-up 2008 article, “Transforming College and University Foreign Language Departments” (Byrnes 287-292), argue that foreign language programs should produce majors with a “deep translingual and transcultural competence” (MLA 3). To achieve this goal, they call for an integrative approach to the articulation of foreign language programs. Individual courses should “address a broad range of curricular needs” (5) and be linked both thematically and with an eye to teaching language and content from beginning German through senior seminars. Such an approach would bridge the divide between beginning language courses — conducted by pedagogy and second language acquisition experts, grad students, instructors and adjuncts — and upper-level content seminars taught by tenured or tenure-track literary scholars. Finally, the report calls for more outreach to other programs on campus.

Both by nature and as a result of my training and work experience, I find such a synthetic, integrative approach to curricular design attractive. My academic positions have been at institutions whose German majors tended to be double majors most of whom were not interested in attending Graduate school in German, I would like to think of my own teaching as being informed by the Heidi Byrnes adage of “content from the beginning, grammar through the end,” and I have had the good fortune of being trained by mentors and working with colleagues who feel strongly that professors belong in the German 101 classroom. I also believe that the MLA report can help my area, German Studies, and my new department, Classical and Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures, to retain more students at the beginning levels, to produce more majors at the upper levels, and to gain more respect and support in the current intellectual and economic environment. Yet I am concerned that, in its call for integration, the MLA report fails to take into consideration key issues of difference and specialization. I address these issues from the context of an urban public university that offers an MA in German, an MA in Language Learning and a Ph.D. in Modern Languages, but I hope to raise questions and offer suggestions that are applicable to a broad range of institutional settings.

II. Differences

A. Institutional Differences

The authors of the MLA report pay scant attention to institutional differences. While representing both commonly taught and lesser taught languages, the authors of the report all come from elite institutions: three private universities, one private college, one flagship public university, the Defense Language Institute, and the Winston Churchill foundation. I know these worlds because they are where I received my degrees. My professional world has been much different. Following graduate school, I taught for three years at a liberal arts college. As everyone who has taught or is teaching at similar institutions knows, there is no two-tiered system at such places, or at least not in German departments, because the one or two, or maybe three people in the department do it all. They have first hand experience creating integrated programs, and it is dismaying that such a perspective did not find its way into the report.

I am now at an “Urban, Public University.” I enjoy my job, appreciate the racial, ethnic, and economic diversity of my students, and care deeply about my institution’s mission to reach out to students in the Detroit metropolitan area. But instructors at my institution face challenges that are far less common at elite institutions, beginning with the fact that most of the students we teach work to pay for their educations at an institution that is working to raise its graduation rates. There is a three-semester language requirement at Wayne State University, but to help students get through it, we teach our beginning sequence over the course of three semesters. To help out our commuter students, our courses meet twice a week for two hours. Even with the language requirement, we find ourselves in an environment that increasingly supports science and professional programs over the humanities. Moreover, this support is encouraged by a governor who has declared that state support for public universities will be determined by 1) retention and graduation rates and 2) the number of degrees produced in areas that can help Michigan’s economy.

At my institution, instructors of beginning language classes — regardless of rank — are torn between the need — both ethical and self-serving — to help working students to complete graduation requirements, and the need to create the foundations for students to become majors. Because they deal with such realities on a daily basis, it is understandable that some of my colleagues dismiss the MLA report as elitist and out of touch. The MLA is an highly visible organization with influence from which all of us can benefit, and for this reason I encourage it to include on its ad hoc committees representatives from different types of institutions: Liberal Arts Schools, Community Colleges, Non-Flagship schools, and schools from all tiers: 1-4. Even if the report’s primary aim is to make recommendations to Ph.D. granting institutions, those institutions need to be preparing Ph.D.s who are ready for the challenges of the broad range of German

programs that are out there. A more diverse committee might lead to reports whose idealism is tempered by an awareness of different realities.

B. Disciplinary Differences

The authors of the MLA Report call for “coherent 4-year curricula that situate language study in cultural, historical, geographical, and cross-cultural frames” (MLA Ad Hoc Committee, “Transforming” 290) and support what they describe as the trend of hiring into foreign language departments faculty members “trained in areas such as media, area studies, performance studies, film, religion, and art history” (290). German programs like mine are too small to afford such luxuries, however. And I’m not convinced this is a desirable goal. First, it overlooks the fact that German graduate programs are already producing more Ph.D.s than can be hired. Second, it ignores differences between what we do as scholars of language, literature, and culture and what scholars in other disciplines do. This suggests to my mind a sense of disregard for our work, which involves the study of texts, particularly narrative texts, and the goal of enabling students “to do things with words and to recover what has been done with words, socially, historically, politically . . . interpersonally” (Swaffar para. 13), and I would add, rhetorically and aesthetically.

I agree with Peter Pfeiffer that graduate students and faculty trained in other areas “are socialized in a range of disciplinary contexts that have *nothing* to do with consistent approaches to language teaching” (297). They do not have and should not be expected to have training needed to combine language and content instruction. It seems to me that we should, instead, valorize our own work by encouraging students in other areas to become fluent in foreign languages. The MLA report makes this suggestion but doesn’t go far enough. Edward M. White proposes doing away with the generally very superficial graduate student foreign language reading proficiency requirement. As he argues, “Because proficiency in a foreign language takes years of study and reasonably intense work, we need to define the level of proficiency and the language options with clarity and make them prerequisites for *admission* to graduate study (2).” Elite universities could be on the forefront of such a trend. Such an approach would insure that North American graduate students, like those in other countries, are at least bilingual, and it might allow for more students from other departments to take our graduate courses.

While I don’t think we German programs should be hiring experts from other disciplines, I do agree with the MLA report’s outreach recommendation. At Wayne State University, the language lab has a series of foreign films that are introduced by faculty from across the disciplines. A colleague in English has created a poetics study group that involves colleagues from English and the foreign language programs. We are working on developing a European Studies minor. We are beginning to talk with

colleagues in other areas about offering courses on related topics. And even the much-resisted merger has helped to foster interdisciplinary collaboration. The MLA Report can help to support the argument for the need for more work that allows different areas to complement each other while maintaining their identities.

III. The Pressure to Specialize

A. Specialization of Undergraduate Students

Unlike most other programs, foreign language programs try to attract students, in part, by presenting themselves as a valuable compliment to another, “real” major. While the MLA report laudably encourages us to “incorporate cultural inquiry at all levels,” it supports the sense that foreign languages aren’t real majors by asking us to create courses that “address more subject areas” (4). This goal may be achievable for Spanish programs, with their large faculties and high enrollments, but it is unrealistic for most German programs to address the myriad subject areas that students choose as their “real majors.”

I strongly support interdisciplinary work, yet I wonder if, by assuming an “anything goes” attitude and by concerning ourselves first and foremost with helping students to relate German to their other majors, we aren’t fragmenting ourselves, losing sight of the centrality of language to our mission, and depriving our students of knowledge of how disciplines organize knowledge. I would argue that we need curricular goals that aim high while remaining grounded in institutional realities. By arguing for the goal of “translingual and transcultural competence” and against the goal of “near native proficiency,” I am concerned that the MLA report does not really help programs to do this.

German companies in the Detroit metropolitan area hire many of our graduates, so my program’s top goal is a high level of language proficiency. This doesn’t mean we produce perfectly fluent speakers. Unless they are heritage speakers or have had extensive training in secondary school, most undergraduates at most institutions do not achieve “near native proficiency,” even if they have been abroad for a year. Non-native speakers must continue to develop their language skills throughout their graduate programs and beyond. Yet proficiency standards and the goal, however elusive, of near-native skills, are more helpful than the very difficult to measure goal of “translingual and transcultural competence.” They allow institutions to set benchmarks and to help give students skills to develop their language abilities on their own.

While the goal of “near native proficiency” may be a stretch, the model of transcultural understanding described in the MLA report (4-6) reflects goals that are neither measurable nor, to my mind, achievable in four years and the 30-35 hours re-

quired for a major in a foreign language. First of all, there is the question of the culture that a program will focus on: Swiss or Austrian culture, Turkish-German culture, Ruhrpott culture, Hip Berlin culture, conservative Swabian culture? We cannot teach it all. More important than transcultural competence or interdisciplinary majors is teaching information literacy skills so that our students know how to find, use, and assess information—about things German—in order to continue beyond graduation to pursue what should be a life-long rather than a curricular goal.

Finally, I propose that we, like our colleagues in English and history, treat German Studies as a case study in disciplinary work by means of which students work towards the goal, outlined in the accreditation standards of the Higher Learning Commission, of developing the capacity “to sift and winnow massive amounts of information in order to discover or create new or better understandings of ourselves and the world we live in” (53). We should thus consider a major in German not, or not only, a blueprint for how to be a German professor, but rather as one of a number of possible frameworks for asking questions and learning.” (Hock 55).

B. Specialization and Graduate Students

The MLA report argues for increased graduate student training in pedagogy and more teaching experience in intermediate and advanced classes. I am a beneficiary and a proponent of such training, but the current economic climate — at least at public institutions — forces us to recognize that every new thing that we decide to train graduate students to do means they have less time to learn about another thing. Graduate students are expected to know the literary canon, linguistics, history of the language, Middle High German, non-canonical texts, critical theory, film, theories of second language acquisition, applications of technology in teaching, and whatever their professors’ research interests happen to be. Notably, graduate students are supposed to master all of this after they have come out of undergraduate programs that have been working to appeal students’ “real” majors. Once they have completed their coursework, graduate students must write a dissertation that will be publishable in a market with ever fewer book publishers. Then there are the conference and publication requirements.

While the MLA report and the profession call for better-rounded graduate students, funding realities encourage them to specialize, quickly. From an administrative standpoint at my university, graduate students need to get in, choose a research specialty as soon as possible, write their dissertations, and get out in five years. Funding is tight, graduate assistantships are few, and in my new department no longer automatically assigned to a given area. In response to this situation, I suggest that graduate education in German needs more flexibility and more rigidity, more generalization and more specialization, and ideally more funding and a bit more time. To achieve this, one

might think of the Ph.D. in terms of an undergraduate major. There is a need for “general” classes — including solid pedagogy training and an introduction to the methods of German studies. Such classes should reflect nation-wide standards that are informed by general professional needs. Beyond such basics, each program should have a core program that reflects not comprehensive coverage (which is no longer possible except perhaps in the most well-endowed programs) but its research strengths. Finally, Ph.D. programs in foreign languages might consider working together with Ph.D. programs in other related areas such as language pedagogy, history, art history, film, intellectual history, women’s studies to create a broad and flexible minor structure that requires students to assemble a minor related to either their dissertation research or the kind of teaching they would like to do or both. That way, German programs can focus on what we do well while encouraging students to develop a secondary field of interest that will help them professionally and hopefully put an end to the call for hiring people from other disciplines into German programs. We need to prepare our graduate students for the new challenges that they will face in this century, and this will mean rearticulating the pedagogical, intellectual and pre-professional goals of our programs.

C. The Specialization of the Professorate

The MLA report calls for a more integrative approach to the structuring of foreign language programs at a time when higher education is emphasizing increasing specialization. As William Plater has observed: “The actual work ordinarily considered to be ‘faculty work’ is increasingly done by specialists in, respectively, research, professional service, or administration. The holistic, integrated career of the ‘professor’ is being relegated to a decreasing minority in most institutions and remains intact at only a relative few elite colleges and universities” (36). This move towards specialization is evident in a way ignored by the MLA report: the professionalization of student advising, and in a way underscored by the MLA report: the division between language and literature faculty.

One reason that the foreign language programs were merged at Wayne State University was to save money at the administrative level, and in my new department, there has been a move towards more consolidated advising, such as what one currently has in the chemistry department. While I like the synergy created by this merger, I worry that relinquishing advising duties is not healthy for smaller areas like German. I would have liked to hear more from the ad hoc committee about the role it envisions for advising and advisors in the new structures it is proposing. It seems to me that if we are going to guide students through double majors and try to create connections across campuses, one needs undergraduate advisors who get the opportunity to know students over time (as we do in our classes) and who can then steer them into classes in other departments that might correlate with what they are learning in Ger-

man (which we are best able to do if we are doing interdisciplinary work and are involved in the general intellectual lives on our campuses). I wonder whether professional advisors can help smaller areas achieve these goals — unless of course they themselves are trained in language programs.

The final point I would like to discuss is the need, stated by the MLA report, to transform the two-tiered system. I agree that all full members of a department, even in research programs, need to be trained to and willing to teach at all levels, and I agree that (in contrast to philosophers and political scientists) experts in pedagogy, SLA, and linguistics have a place in and need to be active in foreign language programs. Yet I have some concern with regard to two trends that appear to be supported by the MLA report: first, a theorization of teaching that ignores praxis as a source of knowledge about teaching, and second, the model, common to most Ph.D. programs, that automatically assigns to the SLA/ pedagogy specialist the role of beginning language coordinator and GTA supervisor.

I consider pedagogy training and the theorizing of teaching essential, but I feel that the MLA report overlooks — and here again it strikes me as being dismissive of the work we do and have been doing — the importance of praxis in the development of teaching skills. I had excellent and extensive pedagogy training and mentoring in graduate school, and yet I have had to change my teaching significantly to meet student needs at the different institutions where I have taught. Teaching is not just theory, and the approach to teaching as a separate discipline, as a separate kind of knowledge, has the potential to forget how many fabulous language coordinators there are out there with literature backgrounds. Expertise in second language acquisition is beneficial to a program and necessary in today's PhD-granting programs, but a specialization in SLA theory should not be considered any program's sole route to good and effective teaching and GTA training. Good models, good mentoring, experience at all levels, and solid training in foreign language acquisition and theories of second language acquisition must be considered of a piece.

My final point addresses the model that takes pedagogy experts, puts them in charge of beginning classes, GTAs, instructors, and adjuncts, assigns them inhuman amounts of administrative work, and tells them they still need to be publishing if they want to be equals with the "real professors." To make up for all of this work, coordinators get teaching reductions, which means that the people who are potentially our best teachers are not in the classroom at a time when we need to be doing everything we can be doing to attract more majors. While the MLA report rightly states that we need to bridge the language-culture gap, it doesn't really offer structures that might help us to develop a more collaborative approach to coordination and GTA training, to merge teaching theory with praxis, and to encourage collaboration between literary scholars, cultural scholars, and scholars of second language acquisition. One model might place the SLA expert not in charge of coordination but in charge of educating the department

of new trends and developments, and it might insist that coordination, like other major administrative duties, is a rotating or a shared assignment. Such a model would allow not only GTAs but all members of a department to benefit from the expertise of the pedagogy expert and it would free him or her to do more actual teaching and testing of theories at all levels of language training.

“Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World” is a valuable document, but it tends to overlook many realities faced by language programs at non-elite institutions and professional specialization that affects all of us at larger institutions and in Ph.D.-granting programs. Ultimately, the report will be only as useful as the discussions and critiques it generates and the concrete solutions that arise out of them.

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Charlotte Melin

Teaching Graduate Students about Teaching— Beyond the MLA Report

The MLA Report, “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” has sparked much discussion, and yet its spirited appeal for a transformation of foreign language education in the U.S. says little about the groundwork needed at the level of graduate education to leverage change. After stating the case that there is a two-tiered system must be dismantled, the authors comment, “The changes we foresee in the undergraduate curriculum call for changes in the way graduate studies are structured as well. To meet the needs of undergraduate language programs [. . .], graduate studies should provide substantive training in language teaching and in the use of new technologies in addition to cultivating extensive disciplinary knowledge and strong analytic and writing skills” (Languages 241). Later, the report urges departments to “Enhance and reward graduate student training in languages and in language teaching. Teach graduate students to use technology in language instruction and learning. Ensure that doctoral programs include funding for research abroad and language work” (Languages 242).

To be sure, these recommendations are important and eminently appropriate. Nonetheless, they do not go far enough, particularly in the area of redefining how we teach graduate students to teach. Before turning attention to the question of how we should prepare these rising colleagues, three problems that are introduced by the report invite analysis in relation to discussion of graduate education.

First, the “two-tiered system” nomenclature, which supports the MLA Report’s critique of foreign language education in the U.S. and its recommendations about articulation, functions as an enabling narrative with ambiguous effect. Like the aspirational proficiency goal of the “native speaker” that is the background to the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines, the detailed map of a fully articulated system of target language courses through the advanced level has much merit. At the same time, this visionary conception, which is presented as the favored remedy for curricular rifts, is limited by the fact that it derives from a single perspective.¹ The report’s critique of “bifurcation” tends to obscure the diverse teaching and intellectual commitments of current faculty, including their efforts to interweave language and content throughout all course levels.² Eclipsed is also the stunning array of language, film, culture, Business German, and literature courses that populate our complex curricular systems, and the experience

that many of us—departments, faculty, and students alike—already have with this expanded curriculum.

Furthermore, the solution advanced by the report (a seamlessly integrated curriculum) is not likely to occur and, if it were implemented, would not have the capacity to address the very real issues of student mobility across multiple education systems that many institutions face. Indeed, some points made by the report in this regard seem inadvertently to reinforce aspects of bifurcation, such as the advice that graduate students be trained in the teaching of languages and use of new technologies. This brief recommendation does not make sufficient distinction between narrow “cookbook” or “survival” training and advanced professional development. It also overlooks the fact that graduate departments have for decades been teaching diverse pedagogies, and in very substantial ways.³

Secondly, the report seems to depict an educational environment for graduate studies that is sheltered from harsh external realities. The undergraduates who continue on into academic careers are few. Some lack a traditional German studies background; some take advantage of teaching Fulbrights or other exchange programs before starting graduate school. Once there, graduate students are carried along in system fraught with competing demands: fierce academic pressures in their programs and when they teach, the effects of administrative directives about efficient curricular management, textbooks that may be mismatched to new educational values, and the availability (or lack) of technology. For most departments, support depends on an archaic system of teaching assistantships (TA positions) in courses that exceed ADFL recommendations for class size and that tax crowd control skills as much as pedagogical acumen.⁴ Beginning and intermediate experience is easy to gain for graduate students. Experience in other types of courses is rare.

Thirdly, the report misses a key opportunity to ask more specifically how we have to make teaching a sustained professional commitment, before, during, and after graduate studies.⁵ This imperative raises a host of questions: How we guide new TAs (teaching assistants) to teach beginning language and use technology is quickly explained, but do we as graduate departments ensure that those skills translate into successful teaching in other types of courses?⁶ Do TAs teach writing, extensive reading, or digital literacy? Are they involved in teaching cultures and languages across the curriculum? Do we as mentoring faculty take seriously the possible benefits of action research or research-driven curriculum design, using the findings of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research? What are the arguments that can help us redefine and productively critique Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or proficiency-oriented teaching?

For departments, these questions test our assumptions about the type of education we provide. Fundamentally, they put us in the awkward position of asking whether we still assume that students are “born teachers” who naturally absorb the

skills of teaching through incidental means, or whether we believe that becoming a teacher is an intentional, long-term process that includes formal and informal interactions. To move from a complacent stance of “do what we say, not what we do” in teaching, we need to foster intellectually nimble future colleagues who will take on the even greater challenges of our changing profession that lie beyond the horizon of the MLA report.

Five reforms in graduate education would provide avenues for stimulating the type of change that is needed. Many of the recommendations made here are indebted to current models that could readily be extended across institutions, with appropriate adaptations to new departmental contexts:

1. Make teaching about teaching an on-going project. Even before students enter graduate school, a range of student-centered work/study opportunities could make translingual and transcultural competence a natural rather than foreign concept. Advanced undergraduates, for example, can carry out research to identify texts for teaching, work on technology projects, carry out service learning, or become language group discussion leaders. From the start of the graduate program, departments should build a more dynamic relationship between the pedagogy seminar for first-time TAs and other opportunities for learning about teaching. Workshops on the use of technology tools, the teaching of writing, or the classroom dynamics of discussing controversial issues, for instance, could supplement the core seminar. They should also encourage every graduate student to develop at least one area of specialization in teaching at a minimum. For new TAs, this could be accomplished by combining critical discussion of the “four skills” and culture with analysis of the MLA report or other white papers, new SLA research, textbook and website critiques, and interviews with experienced teachers. The impact of the seminar should also be expanded with program structures that encourage sustained, good teaching (e.g. orientation week, weekly cohort meetings, systematic development of teaching portfolios, and reviews of graduate students and their progress that include formative commentary about teaching). Many programs already have such measures in place because these practices help graduate students make more efficient use of their time. Departments should also emphasize the teaching of writing as a project without disciplinary boundaries and take advantage of campus resources (e.g. the writing center, office for teaching and learning, or library “smart learning commons”). Graduate students should be encouraged to remain intellectually invested in teaching throughout their academic degree programs, rather than hearing from faculty that teaching responsibilities are in conflict with a focus on scholarship.⁷ Yes, teaching takes time, but were it not for the courses we teach, there would be no need for faculty. While it is unlikely that a second pedagogy seminar could be instituted, short-term, intensive professional development has a viable place in graduate studies that can foster sustained discussions about teaching. Faculty should match graduate students with opportunities to explore the use of instructional technology,

articulation issues, universal curriculum design for students needing learning accommodations, project-based curriculum,⁸ or outcomes assessment. Programs should also make course observations a part of departmental culture as a formative vehicle for sharing expectations about teaching among graduate students and faculty.

2. Model the value of data-driven decision making and planning processes. Departments have an important opportunity to introduce students to qualitative and quantitative research in SLA through readings, lectures, workshops, action research, and funded work to develop curricular materials. Curricular reform provides an opportunity to involve graduate students directly in faculty-level discussions of course design, foreign language advocacy initiatives, and outreach to the wider public. Greater transparency about SLA research would keep students informed about the research practices, professional ethics, and varieties of publishing opportunities that are related to teaching.⁹ Students who are aware of these options will also gain clearer perspective on a greater range of publications types (including co-authored articles, curricular notes, on-line materials) and how they are eventually evaluated in cases of promotion and tenure.

3. Raise difficult questions about the course materials that we use. Ask, “Do we still need textbooks?”¹⁰ Is there a pedagogy of literature? What really happens when students study abroad?” and “What literacies do we want our students to achieve?” When designing courses, practice the process of backward building from student outcomes or learning goals on the macro-level and show the graduate students we mentor how this process translates into lesson planning on the micro-level. Share syllabi and course materials generously, and direct graduate students to professional journals for these materials. Talk with graduate students about how context (liberal arts college vs. land-grant university vs. community college) plays a decisive role in determining educational options.

4. Reform graduate student support to match the new realities of education. We have recognized that TAs need more extensive opportunities for teaching beyond beginning to intermediate courses. Departments should consider that TA positions are an expensive and possibly inefficient way to run a language program.¹¹ Alternate support options could include: fellowships with a modest commitment to outreach work with high schools that makes visible K-16 articulation, collaborative teaching with faculty, graderships or other positions that allow TAs to shadow faculty in core courses for majors, opportunities to teach free-standing content courses, or study abroad courses led or assisted by advanced graduate students. In addition, departments should guarantee that all graduate students in Ph.D. programs spend significant time abroad to ensure high fluency because formal course work in a U.S. graduate program is not likely to yield superior German proficiency; the aims of graduate seminars are different from those of language courses.

5. Show the connections of research, teaching, and career. Workshops and other venues can introduce graduate students to alumni faculty, highlight the relationship between MLA job advertisements and teaching skills, and provide strategic advising to students that encourages them to refine their understanding of how research and teaching interests intersect.¹² Systematically creating opportunities for graduate students to teach or be involved in the types of courses that they may teach later is crucial. These offerings may include lecture courses taught in English, interdisciplinary classes, and performance-based offerings (for example, a German theater class).

Structures that develop graduate students to be our future faculty colleagues, rather than merely “training” them in through long apprenticeship in lower level language courses that leaves us speculating about their untapped potential, will serve the entire profession better than the current system. For their future careers, graduate students need greater clarity from us about ways to connect specialized research practices—theory, close reading, analysis of material culture, digital scholarship, or archival research—with meaningful teaching. Most of all, they must hear that there is no “one-size-fits-all” model when it comes successful programs. Fortunately, there is no need either to build from scratch. A range of models already exists that can serve as a starting point for the curricular transformation that goes hand-in-hand with a reform of graduate education. More than ever, graduate students, our future colleagues, must have at their disposal tools of good decision-making that will sustain them in the face of our rapidly evolving educational system.

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Notes

¹ This paper is informed in part by discussion with co-authors Glenn Levine, Corrine Crane, Monika Chavez, and Thomas A. Lovik in preparing an article, "The Language Program Director in Curricular and Departmental Reform: A Response to the MLA Ad Hoc Report," forthcoming in *Profession 2008* (New York: MLA). The composite 2001 MLA survey of programs indicated that for 1995-9, 68.5% of departments placed more emphasis on culture than literature. See David Goldberg and Elizabeth B. Welles, "Successful College and University Foreign Language Programs, 1995-99," *Profession 2001* (2001).

² See, for example, Heidi Byrnes and Katherine A. Sprang, "Fostering Advanced L2 Literacy: A Genre-based, Cognitive Approach," *Advanced Foreign Language Learning: A Challenge to College Programs*, ed. Heidi and Hiram H. Maxim Byers (Boston: Thomson

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³ The AAUSC (American Association of University Supervisors and Coordinators) was founded in 1980.

⁴ The American Departments of Foreign Language (ADFL) recommendation is 20, with optimum class size of 15.

See: http://www.adfl.org/resources/resources_guidelines.htm.

⁵ Regarding these issues, Wurst describes a portfolio-type exam that is focused on teaching and recommends job-shadowing experience. See Karin A. Wurst, "How Do We Teach Language, Literature, and Culture in a Collegiate Environment and What Are the Implications for Graduate Education?," *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 41.1 (2008).

⁶ Preparing Future Faculty is a national program that focuses on graduate student professional development. In addition, recommendations about graduate student professionalization can be found in, for example, Barbara Gross Davis, *Tools for Teaching* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), John C. Bean, *Engaging Ideas: The Professor's Guide to Integrating Writing, Critical Thinking and Active Learning in the Classroom* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), Jörg Roche, "Professionalizing Second-Language Teaching," *ADFL Bulletin* 27.2 (1996), MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Professionalization of PhDs, "Professionalization in Perspective," *ADFL Bulletin* 34.3 (2003).

⁷ In a few doctoral programs, teaching is limited to a few semesters. Under those circumstances, it would be unlikely that this recommendation could be followed.

⁸ For example, webquests, creation of pedagogical websites or Power Point presentations, and video projects.

⁹ See, for example, Monika Chavez, "We Say "Culture" and Students Ask "What?": University Students' Definitions of Foreign Language Culture," *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 35.2 (2002), Glenn S. Levine, Natalie Eppelsheimer, Franz Kuzay, Simona Moti and Jason Wilbly, "Global Simulation at the Intersection of Theory and Practice in the Intermediate-Level German Classroom," *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German* 37.2 (2004), Jamie Rankin and Florian Becker, "Does Reading the Research Make a Difference? A Case Study of Teacher Growth in FL German," *Modern Language Journal* 90.2 (2006).

¹⁰ Many departments have taken the step of constructing their own curriculum, including by creating open on-line resources. The University of Minnesota's materials, for example, available to other institutions by "express licensing" arrangements at: <http://www.research.umn.edu/techcomm/expresslicense.htm>.

¹¹ These costs depending on the institutional funding model, but may include in addition to salary tuition and other benefits. In some cases, benefit costs for regular instructors may be less and student-learning outcomes better with experienced teachers.

¹² Preparing Future Faculty is a national program with this objective. Post-doctoral teaching fellowships have a similar function. See: <http://www.preparing-faculty.org/>.

Karen Remmler

Rethinking the Place of Languages in a Transcultural Curriculum: Faculty Desire Lines, Curricular Clusters, and the Liberal Arts.

My presentation reported on a number of cross-disciplinary discussions about the place of languages at Mount Holyoke College, a liberal arts women's college in New England and summarized a number of recommendations, both local and global.

Questions:

1) Even as we talk about shifts in the teaching of languages, culture, and literatures from area studies to transnational studies and/or cultural studies, what might be the benefit of introducing more global notions of comparative cultural production, including comparative literature(s), narratives, cultures, and visualities? What are the current models for creating more concrete connections across the campus that recognize the role of languages in shifting fields of cultural studies and area/transnational studies? (What constitutes the teaching of national languages if the very concept of “national” is under investigation?)

2) Instead of situating the “foreign” languages as a block at the college with a distinct set of concerns and methodologies, we are forging different intellectual affinities that involve some form of language teaching, whether it is linguistic, performative, visual, textual, or quantitative. First, we are questioning the hegemony of English and its apparent separation from other languages at the college. Second, we are creating curricular complementarities that include language courses and courses in other disciplines beyond the traditional language across the curriculum models. (This might include a cluster on migration, for example, or introductory courses in film studies or gender studies in Spanish.) And third, we are encouraging departments and programs across the curriculum to include translinguistic and transcultural competencies in their majors.

3) Recognizing the parallels between the status and centrality of languages and the state of the humanities in general at the college, we are also focusing on faculty development. Faculty need retooling in light of increasing attention to transnational, comparative, and global issues. By engaging in continuing transcultural and translinguistic study, faculty can model for students the importance of using languages in or-

der to engage with pressing issues as well as sustaining innovative teaching. How do we sustain that which excites us in our intellectual endeavors? What can all faculty at the college learn from and with those trained in the teaching of foreign languages and in language acquisition?

Summary and Proposals: The Place of Languages at Mount Holyoke College (May 2008)

The following recommendations, to some extent specific to Mount Holyoke College, yet applicable to other institutions, grew out of conversations with faculty across disciplines. The conversations explored possible connections between languages, area studies, cultural studies, interdisciplinary programs/departments, performance, and comparative studies, to name a few. One meeting was dedicated to possible joint efforts between English and the languages to offer courses that reflect common intellectual interests and/or convergences, such as comparative literatures, visual culture, translation, or writing.

Indeed, the purpose of the conversations was to expand the somewhat outdated notion of “the” foreign languages as a coherent entity separate from a much larger group of entities that share intellectual, pedagogical, and structural affinities at the college. These series of conversations was intended to move some of the MLA recommendations forward, and, at the same time, reflect upon new potentials for collaboration across the disciplines.

I offer these recommendations as examples of possible steps. Any action taken must consider the meaning of transnational endeavors on all levels of language and culture teaching as well as the pitfalls of assuming affinities across disciplines. How do we organize our curriculum to reflect lists of complementary courses that would enable students and advisors to generate preferences on-line? For example, what would it take to create a drop-down menu for each course that would list similar and/or related courses at one glance? How do we combine faculty desire lines with student needs? How do we move beyond the barriers caused by ideologies on the one hand, and simple scheduling conflicts, on the other? The following recommendations are starting points and are intended to address the practical side of our dilemma in order to attend to the actual structural and intellectual shifts that are affecting us from inside our institutions and encroaching upon us due to external political and financial pressures.

Recommendations:

1) Create a forum or venue for sharing ideas and information about possible curricular connections. Such connections might include paired courses, discussion sections in a target language, clusters of courses or events around themes or areas, and class visits by faculty across the disciplines. Any increase in communication about possible connections needs to come from the faculty and yet requires a shift in the way in which departments and programs plan and schedule courses. At the same time, we need to create the tools in consultation with the Dean of Faculty, Registrar and Chairs to distribute this information before courses are finalized. **Post new courses well in advance of finalization to enable exchange sooner rather than later.**

2) Deepen the value of teaching upper-level courses in a variety of languages to majors and non-majors. Encourage departments and programs to consider a more committed and explicit inclusion of language requirements beyond the current college policy to enhance research and learning abroad across the curriculum. Create innovative courses at all levels, for example, similar to the current models in progress in Spanish and Film studies and Gender studies that demonstrate the advantages of interdisciplinary ties by teaching in languages other than English in which multiple departments and programs benefit. Provide more opportunities for students to engage in such courses and, at the same time, draw students in at an earlier stage through courses in English. Create two-credit discussion sections to accompany first-year seminars or other courses in which work in primary language makes sense.

3) In order to create courses that combine language learning with cultural context and/or knowledge, invite departments and programs in the process of requesting positions to consult with language faculty when considering positions with potential affinities. Possible areas might include Film studies and the languages, IR and the languages, and given the global reach of growing fields at the college, Environmental studies, History, Asian studies, etc. **Build in discussions with Language chairs during the allocation process to explore possible joint or shared positions.**

4) Create more intentional funding of faculty development, including the learning of languages during the summer and curricular development throughout the year.

5) Encourage discussion across the disciplines on growing imbrications in visual culture, comparative literatures, the arts, and /or transnational contexts and topics such as migration studies, globalization, war, and science studies.

6) Provide resources and opportunities for English, the languages, Film studies and the Arts to offer courses that reflect common intellectual interests and/or convergences, such as comparative literatures, visual culture, translation, performance or writing.